THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) On 1.3.2006 Pawan Hans Helicopters Limited (PHHL) entered into a contract with Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Ltd. to deploy 12 Dauphin Helicopters, complaint with Aviation Standard – 4 (AS-4) requirement, by 29.07.2006. However due to delay in making these helicopters AS-4 complaint, ONGC agreed to extend the time limit upto 31.07.2007. PHHL deployed the required number of AS-4 complaint helicopters by 31.12.2007.

(d) These Dauphin Helicopters needed major retrofitment by the manufacturer to make them AS-4 complaint and subsequent certification by the French Regulatory Authorities before being deployed with ONGC.

(e) ONGC deducted liquidated damages Rs. 14.94 crore from the charter hire charges due to PHHL for the delay. The same has been contested by PHHL because such delay had occurred due to circumstances beyond the control of PHHL and ONGC has not suffered any operational loss as PHHL continued to provide helicopters under old contract.

Plan for VRS/ERS in Civil Aviation Sector

3358. SHRI SHYAMAL CHAKRABORTY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of employees working in the civil aviation sector; and

(b) whether Government has any plan of retrenchment/Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) Early Retirement Scheme (ERS) for them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) There are approximately 52,042 employees working in the civil aviation sector in the attached/autonomous/public sector organisations under this Ministry.

(b) There are no such proposals in the above organisations.

Status of Shri Biju Patnaik International Airport

3359. SHRIMATI RENUBALA PRADHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present status of Shri Biju Patnaik International Airport at Bhubaneswar;

(b) the figure of air passengers who travelled through Shri Biju Patnaik International Airport in the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) by when this airport named after this freedom fighter would get all facilities like Delhi/Mumbai/Kolkata/Chennai airports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (c) Biju Patnaik Airport at Bhubaneswar is one of the 35 non-metro airports taken up for development and upgradation to international standards. At this airport, construction of a New

Terminal Building with all modern facilities including two aerobridges at a cost of Rs. 145.54 crores to handle 800 passengers at a time has been initiated. Airports Authority of India (AAI) has also a plan for extension of apron to facilitate aerobridge stands.

(b) The total number of passengers handled at Biju Patnaik Airport, Bhubaneswar for the last three year (2006-07, 2007-08 and 2008-09) are 351336, 702201 and 671861 respectively.

Racial discrimination of Indians by Air France

3360. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it has come to the notice of his Ministry the racial discrimination shown to Indians who were coming by Air France flight from USA to Mumbai by the aviation authorities of France for nearly twelve hours;

(b) whether it is also a fact that neither they gave them hotel accommodation as has been done in the case of other passengers or were allowed to go out to get hotel accommodation on their own;

(c) if so, whether his Ministry has raised this matter with the concerned authorities of France; and

(d) if so, what is the outcome?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The matter was taken up, both with Air France as well as with the French Government authorities. The French authorities have explained that the aircraft had developed a technical snag for which a judicial probe was ordered by the French Attorney General. That prohibited access to the aircraft until 10.00 hrs. the next day. Most passengers having valid travel documents were transferred to hotels. However, fifty two Indian nationals could not be transferred to hotels because they did not have transit visas for Finance. Air France initiated grant of visa to these passengers, after which they were given hotel accommodation. This process took time and delays occurred at various stages. However, the french Ambassador has conveyed his sincere regrets for the unfortunate situation faced by the Indian passengers.

Exorbitant rate of interest on use of credit cards

3361. SHRIMATI KUSUM RAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether banks like Citibank, HSBC, SBI, ICICI and HDFC are charging exorbitant rate of interest on use of credit cards despite RBI guidelines to charge less interest;

(b) whether the due amount a customer has to pay including the interest doubles the actual usage in a year;

(c) whether there is any scheme for one time settlement of credit card dues, particularly Citibank, HSBC and ICICI;